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Reenabling Air Force Command and Control for Twenty-first-Century Partnerships

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It is time for Airmen to reenable the command and control (C2) of air operations as part of a joint force in today's complex security environment. Earlier this year, the Joint Staff released the latest version of Joint Publication (JP) 3-30, *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations*.¹ Like all doctrine, JP 3-30's publication marks both an end and a beginning. The product is the culmination of a joint process by which Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines synthesized their experience and understanding of air and space C2 to provide future joint force commanders and staffs authoritative options. It codifies several important concepts, such as organizing with both theater and subtheater joint force air component commanders (JFACC), the role of air component coordination elements, considerations for the C2 of remotely piloted aircraft, and the potential for assigning JFACCs responsibilities for space-coordinating authority.

However, the publication of JP 3-30 also signals the start of its revision. Transformation in the information age requires continuous improvement, and our dynamic Air Force strives to maintain the leading edge in the domains of air, space, and cyberspace. So, as today's version of JP 3-30 shapes how our joint forces command and control current air operations, we challenge our Airmen to renew the conversation on

how best to command and control air, space, and cyberspace forces for tomorrow's joint fight.

This discussion involves two overarching imperatives—joint trust and operational flexibility. With regard to the former, relationships between commanders are often more important than command relationships. History offers multiple examples of successful teamwork: Gen Robert E. Lee and Gen Thomas Jonathan “Stonewall” Jackson, Gen Omar Bradley and Maj Gen Elwood “Pete” Quesada, Gen Norman Schwarzkopf and Lt Gen Charles “Chuck” Horner, and Gen Tommy Franks and Lt Gen T. Michael “Buzz” Moseley, among others. The personal relationships, frequent interaction, and shared adversity of these great tandems (and their staffs) forged mutual trust and respect. However we organize our future air components and C2, we must intentionally maximize contact between *joint* commanders and *joint* planners to facilitate the *joint* trust necessary to attain the timeless principles of unity of (*joint*) command and (*joint*) effort. Following Stonewall Jackson's fatal injury at the Battle of Chancellorsville in 1863, General Lee lamented that he'd lost his right arm. Airmen succeed when they achieve that same level of relevance to their joint partners.

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Turning to operational flexibility, future air components must capitalize upon the speed, range, and flexibility of air, space, and cyber power in a responsive and reliable manner to meet a broad range of security challenges. Introducing the Quadrennial Defense Review of 2010, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said that “the United States needs a broad portfolio of military capabilities with maximum versatility across the widest possible spectrum of conflict.”²

Assuming finite resources, our charge is flexibility. The imperative of flexibility carries a variety of implications for our force structure, force presentation, capabilities,

Furthermore, our operational flexibility becomes even more vital as the US Army migrates to modular brigade combat teams with assets previously controlled at the division level. Airspace control and area air defense—already complex endeavors—become even more so when indirect fires; air defense; and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets are decentralized. Nonetheless, when the needs for responsiveness and asset assurance override the advantages of mass and efficiency, JFACCs must adapt or become irrelevant.

Finally, our discourse on future C2 should also consider forthcoming developments in

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missions, and processes. With regard to C2, JFACCs, joint air operations centers, and entire theater air-ground systems must be capable of operations ranging from major contingencies through counterinsurgencies to humanitarian assistance. This requirement calls for proficiency in both centralized (strategic attack) and decentralized (counterinsurgency) planning processes, and it demands effectiveness in both general- and direct-support relationships. Our joint and coalition partners recognize that no “one-size-fits-all” approach exists and that JFACCs must be supple enough to command and control air, space, and cyber power whenever and however required.

cyberspace. In May 2010, the US Senate confirmed Gen Keith Alexander as leader of US Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM). Our Air Force has taken critical steps to support the Department of Defense’s cyberspace efforts, including standing up Twenty-fourth Air Force as the service component to USCYBERCOM. As we work through the C2 of cyber capabilities, joint trust and operational flexibility remain pertinent. Centralized C2 of cyber capabilities makes sense in many circumstances. Conversely, we can also envision times when the synchronicity and responsiveness of certain cyber effects within a joint operating area are so crucial to the campaign that devolution of specific authori-



ties is appropriate. Just as JFACCs can assume responsibilities for space-coordinating authority, so should they be able to offer their joint force commanders the capability to assume responsibilities for cyberspace-coordinating authority. The bridge into Fourteenth Air Force and the space community offered by commanders of Air Force forces, directors of space forces, and the contingent of space professionals resident in our air and space operations centers creates enormous value for the joint force. Can a similar bridge link our joint commanders with relevant cyber capabilities?

JP 3-30 represents enormous progress in the maturation of the JFACC and C2. But it

is already time for another healthy and introspective conversation on the future C2 of air, space, and cyberspace power. ★

Notes

1. Joint Publication 3-30, *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations*, 12 January 2010, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_30.pdf.

2. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, "Defense Budget / QDR Announcement" (speech, Arlington, VA, 1 February 2010), <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1416> (accessed 18 June 2010).



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